

LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Henry J. Mroz Administration Office
155 Merrimack Street
Lowell, Massachusetts 01852

William J. Samaras
Mayor and Chairperson

Jackie Doherty
Vice-Chairperson

Andre P. Descoteaux
Robert J. Hoey Jr.
Dominik Hok Lay
Connie A. Martin
Gerard Nutter

Policy Subcommittee Meeting

Monday, April 23, 2018
Central Administration Building
5th Floor
6:00 p.m.

Tel: (978) 674-4324

Fax: (978) 937-7609

Subcommittee Members Present:

Chairperson Gerry Nutter, Jackie Doherty and
Connie Martin

School Department Personnel Present:

James P. Hall, Legal Counsel
Jeannine M. Durkin, Deputy Superintendent for
Student Support Services
Robin Desmond, Assistant Superintendent of
Curriculum and Instruction

Chairperson Gerry Nutter called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. The Subcommittee update is in response to the following motions:

Motion by School Committee Member Gerry Nutter, which was approved at the March 21, 2018 School Committee Meeting:

"To refer item #8.I "School Committee look into creating a mandatory citywide recess policy for all elementary and middle school students" to a Policy Subcommittee for further discussion."

The following agenda item was discussed:

- **Develop a District Wide Recess Policy**

Chairperson Nutter opened up the meeting and invited audience members to address the Subcommittee regarding their concerns about the recess policy. The following people addressed the Subcommittee in favor of developing a district wide recess policy:

Rebecca Ludvino
Lieba Golden-Koulendros
Amy Bission
Debbie Caverly
Ashley Pizzuti
Evelyn Pizzuti
Kaia Clark
Mickie Dumont
Darcie Boyer
Jenna Vinson
Havon Mousa
Laura Ortiz
Suzanne Delesdermeir
Elizabeth Gilreath
Paul Georges
Danielle Savoy

Chairperson Nutter then asked Deputy Superintendent Jeannine Durkin to speak about the report that was provided. Deputy Durkin informed the Subcommittee that the recess report provided is in response to the motion that had been brought forward by Mr. Nutter. Deputy Durkin and Robin Desmond, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction convened a meeting with Principals relative to the motion. The agenda for the meeting included a review of the following:

1. All recess time allocations across the district.
2. State laws and regulations for instructional learning time.
3. Literature/guidelines for recess provided by the Lowell Education Justice Alliance.
4. MASC and state policies for model Recess Policies.

Deputy Durkin stated that there were thirteen (13) school Principals in attendance with almost equal representation from elementary and middle schools. Those Principals unable to attend the meeting were provided with the agreed upon discussion points from the meeting and afforded the opportunity to provide feedback prior to the April 23, 2018 Policy Subcommittee Meeting. Deputy Durkin also stated that they had a difficult time finding any recess policies throughout Massachusetts. The Principals agreed to the following:

- Elementary Schools would work to incorporate a twenty (20) minute recess daily. They also agreed to incorporate a five (5) minute activity into morning meetings daily (i.e. yoga, stretch break, dance, etc.) and a five (5) minute break (i.e. yoga, stretch break, dance, etc.) every afternoon.
- Middle School Principals agreed to work to incorporate fifteen (15) minutes of recess daily and two five (5) minute breaks as detailed above daily.

- District leaders agreed to provide schools with recommended activities for the five (5) minute breaks and indoor recess.
- All administrators in attendance agreed that there need not be a policy with regard to these recommendations given the consensus amongst leaders. Participants all noted that in order to consider additional time beyond what is detailed above would require time added to the school day given the time on learning requirements. Contractual requirements would also need to be reviewed and potentially renegotiated to adjust the schedule further. It is with this in mind that these recommendations are shared with the School Committee for consideration for implementation in 2018-2019.

All Principals felt that they could implement this right away and they would be able to get some consistency as the district continues to look at this issue. The team all agreed that students need breaks. Deputy Durkin stated that we potentially may need to extend the school day which would also mean looking at contractual requirements and working with the unions to compensate staff and adjust schedules. She recommended that a task force be put together to look at future recommendations.

Ms. Martin asked about the total number of elementary and middle schools that would be impacted if the policy was implemented and how many schedules would change.

Deputy Durkin stated that it would be about 50 percent. She also added that those five (5) minute breaks would be daily and that some of our schools are already doing this, but implementing this would bring more consistency across the district.

Ms. Doherty agreed that students need recess and stated that she is frustrated that some schools and that all elementary students don't get the same experience. She also liked the idea of a task force and encouraged School Site Councils to use this as an agenda item and report back to the Committee. She also wanted to know what the next steps are and what the time line is and also felt that students should be allowed to talk at lunch.

Ms. Martin stated that this baseline of effort is in the right direction. Ms. Martin recognizes that there are a lot of challenges and recognizes schedule changes are very difficult and would support this short term. She stated that losing recess as a punishment doesn't make a lot of sense and looks forward to hearing from teachers with alternatives and feels it's critically important to include teachers. Ms. Martin concluded by saying that what we need a very specific timeline with what the next steps are moving forward. She feels that the charge resides with the Committee, but also with parents, teachers and the unions to make the necessary changes and that we all need to be part of the solution and we need to all be held accountable.

Mr. Nutter thanked the administration for putting this report together so quickly. He stated that he is not in favor of students losing recess as well as not being able to talk during lunch and that this discussion can be continued at a future Policy Subcommittee.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to support the administration's recommendation for elementary schools to incorporate a minimum twenty (20) minute daily recess and to incorporate a five minute activity break in the morning and in the afternoon and for the middle schools to incorporate a minimum fifteen (15) minutes of daily recess with a five minute activity break in the morning and in the afternoon and to implement this for the 2018-2019 school year. In addition, the district will establish a task force to review and make recommendations for further actions as well as a time line; seconded by Ms. Martin 3 yeas APPROVED

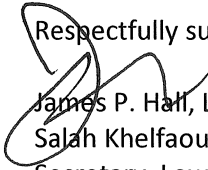
Ms. Martin also asked for a delineated policy in terms of removing recess as a potential punishment and would like that in the form of a recommendation from the administration. Deputy Durkin asked if the Subcommittee would feel comfortable with a timeline for the task force to initiate that piece of it as the first agenda item.

Ms. Martin stated that she would be comfortable with that if that could be in place by September.

Deputy Durkin concluded by stating that they will be having further discussions with the Principals and as a district we want to continue to work with the state around the social and emotional practices that are relative to this motion. She concluded by stating that she would like to have something on the website for next Monday for interested participants to sign up for the task force and the website will also have meeting dates. The schools will also share this information about the task force with their parent groups.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to adjourn at 7:35 p.m.; seconded by Ms. Martin. 3 yeas APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,


James P. Hall, Legal Counsel for Dr.
Salah Khelfaoui, Superintendent and
Secretary, Lowell School Committee

JPH/mes